

**Virginia Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association  
Monthly Board Meeting Minutes  
June 7, 2010**

**Attendees:**

Ken Crews – President  
Sue Ives – President-Elect  
Fred Obenchain – Treasurer  
Les Fuller – Director at Large  
Hank Boyd – Director at Large  
Robin Watson – Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 pm.

**Minutes from meeting of May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010 were approved.**

**Treasurer's Report:**

Beginning Balance: \$31,545.70  
Available Balance: \$29,750.30

Fred discussed some of the transactions to the account since last month; ad for the Nationals book, 3 email blasts, new members and renewals, the newsletter and the alpaca symposium. Sue accepted the Treasurer's Report, Hank seconded and everyone approved the Treasurer's Report.

**Committee Reports:**

**Youth Committee:** No report submitted. (Need Volunteers).

**Education Committee:** No report submitted (Need Volunteers).

**Fiber Committee:** Fiber Committee report for Monday, June 7, 2010 meeting:

We sent out packets by regular mail to 207 alpaca farmers in Virginia. The packet included the proposed amended standards with definitions, a request for comments to be sent to the committee, a copy of the Wool Standards for comparison, and a proposal to hold training workshops in Virginia to support the amended Standards.

We met (B-J Ellis, Pam Whiting, and Linda Pollak), face-to-face in Warrenton (VA), (Judy Schroeder could not make it) to review the responses. We made a couple of minor corrections based on the responses. Since then we have received advice from Ms Wini Labrecque who fully supports the simplicity of the proposed Standards and Definitions as now corrected. This National Fiber/Fleece Judge suggested that our amended standards could serve as a model for other state groups in the country.

We are ready to make a **joint submission of** the amended standards and definitions **from** the Fiber Committee (B-J Ellis, Chair) and the Industrial/Government Relations Committee (John Ferrante, Chair) **to** VDACS: Ms. Olivia Wilson and the Review Board

of VDACS. See cover memo to VDACS.

John Ferrante will receive a copy of this report and the amendment to go to VADCS when BOD members receive theirs. The Fiber Committee & Industrial/Government Committee Chairs will send in the paper work to Olivia Wilson at VDACS and then we will wait to see what else the Board of Review needs from us. . We may not hear anything until late August: the June docket was reportedly full and no other meeting of their Board is scheduled until August.

The VAOBA FCOM has begun work on organizing our initial hands-on Training Clinic on Sorting/Grading & Show-Skirting with Ms. Wini Labreque.. She thinks we can save money by doing this in one-day: MABA (Maryland) held a successful 2-day clinic last June. We have identified a northern Virginia farm that has space and facilities for our clinic but there are further timing and financial/sponsorship logistics to figure out. Respectfully submitted:

B-J Ellis, Chair, Fiber Committee, VAOBA

All accepted B-J's Fiber Committee Report.

**Board Discussion:** Discussion about the fiber committee report was tabled so that the fiber committee members could all have time to approve their memo to VDACS first. The Board reconvened on June 14, 2010 and after much discussion (reading minutes, fiber committee questionnaire and eblasts sent to the members), Hank motioned and Sue seconded to take the recommendation from the fiber committee to submit the following memo directly to VDACS:

#### MEMORANDUM OF TRANSMITTAL

TO: Olivia Wilson, and the Board of Review

FROM: VAOBA Fiber Committee (Linda Polak, Liaison), VAOBA Government Relations Committee (John Ferrante, Chair)

RE: Amended Virginia's Finest Standards for VA Alpaca Fiber (Suri and Hyacaya)

The Fiber Committee of the Virginia Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association (VAOBA) has identified several areas of the current Virginia's Finest standard for alpaca fiber that are factually incorrect, impose an unnecessary, onerous testing expense on farmers, and do not represent the best interests of the alpaca industry in Virginia. These standards were enacted with neither industry review, nor farmer opportunity for comment. For all of the above reasons, amendment as soon as possible is necessary so that we have a correct, reviewed and approved standard.

The enclosed Amendment was sent by regular mail to 207 identifiable VA alpaca farms. Clear, simple instructions were given as to the e mail address for comment and suggestions. Responses from recipients were encouraged and many thoughtful, positive responses were received.

In crafting the amendment, the Virginia's Finest Wool Standard was reviewed, and a fiber committee representative interviewed Ms. Mary Scott, the crafter of that standard, at length. Nearly all responding alpaca farmers appreciated and approved of this approach.

Two negative responses were received: one from a farmer who is moving her animals to Missouri and is no longer a Virginia farm (her complaint was not about the Amendment, but rather that the program itself has no inspector to enforce standards); the other negative responder wants only one tiny segment of fiber and product included in the program, to the exclusion of most farmers and many high quality products, a viewpoint which flies in the face of the Expert Opinion referenced below. Nevertheless, this narrow interest has been addressed by VAOBA providing a private industry label which it will seek to trademark, and for which farmers who are so inclined can provide additional documentation and add this private label designation. (If there are other communications received by VDACS, not sent according to the clear request in the packets, we had no way of considering them).

Most importantly, we have received a true Expert Opinion and full endorsement of the proposed Amendment from Ms. Wini Labrecque, a nationally renowned, published, award-winning fiber artisan and designer, who also is a recognized leader in the development of alpaca fiber use in finished goods, and a highly regarded alpaca fleece Judge. According to Ms. Labrecque: "I can see other organizations looking at your standard as a stepping stone for them to do something similar. It's great that your group wants to get it correct right from the start."

Moreover, Ms. Labrecque, a Pennsylvania resident, is independent of any personal marketing benefit; we feel her approval is conclusive.

Responding farmers are anxious to see this amendment in place and are excited about participating in the program with their high quality fiber products and accessories. Please do not hesitate to use the contact information below should anything further be needed to enact this Amendment, and we would appreciate very much knowing if an opening for consideration of our Amendment becomes available earlier than the August meeting.

We greatly appreciate VDACS', and particularly Ms. Olivia Wilson's, time and assistance as we have worked through this issue.

Respectfully submitted,  
VAOBA Fiber Committee  
E mail: VaobaFiberComm@aol.com

**AMENDEDMENT TO THE STANDARDS:  
VIRGINIA'S FINEST™ QUALITY STANDARDS  
FOR VIRGINIA SURI AND HUACAYA ALPACA FIBER  
AND ALPACA FIBER PRODUCTS**

STANDARDS: All proposed Virginia alpaca fiber and fiber goods must meet or exceed the following standards:

1. Raw fiber must be dry and clean, free from manure, burrs, excessive vegetable matter and other contaminants.

2. Fiber will be free from stain due to uncleanliness (red clay is not considered a permanent stain).
3. Skirted raw blanket fiber is to be free from second cuts.
4. Qualifying raw fiber shall be uniform and consistent throughout - characteristic of the breed type - to include fiber length, character, staple or lock structure, diameter, and with minimal guard hair.
5. Fiber, and products made therefrom, must have high tensile strength with no stress or tip breaks.
6. Qualifying fiber, and products made therefrom, must be harvested from Virginia alpacas.
7. Qualifying fiber may be blended with other fibers for yarn or other products, but shall include on its label "made with \_\_\_% Virginia's Finest™ alpaca fiber." All fiber and fiber goods meeting or exceeding the above requirements will qualify as "Virginia's Finest™."

**DEFINITIONS:**

Blanket Fiber – prime fleece including back, top thigh and top front leg fleece;

Fleece – fiber sheared on a regular basis from alpaca; includes prime blanket, seconds, and thirds;

Guard Hair – stiff, primary hair occurring anywhere in the fleece;

Raw Fiber – unprocessed fleece;

Second Cuts – short clippings with length of less than 1” occurring during shearing;

Seconds – area of fleece including neck to top of head, mid leg and chest fleece;

Tensile Strength – the resistance of fiber to longitudinal stress before breakage occurs; and

Thirds – area of fleece including belly, lower legs, face and tail;

Uniformity – sameness of length, diameter of fiber, and style of suri and Huacaya;

**PROCEDURE:** Any alpaca fiber producer in the Commonwealth of Virginia, having product that meets or exceeds the approved policy standards, must make an application to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, identifying how and where the trademark will be used on the product. In addition, each trademark applicant must sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, thereby consummating a guarantee of quality. Benefits and privileges of the "Virginia's Finest™" Trademark Program will then be afforded the identified trademark participant.

**Industry Relations:** The following report was submitted by John Ferante, June 7, 2010:

As designs for the Fact Sheet to be sent to VA government officials progresses I wanted to provide information concerning the status and to solicit the help of VAOBA Board members and the membership in general. The format of the communication is Questions and Answers. I anticipate a series of questions and answers that address the more important descriptors of the VA alpaca industry. Government officials have little time to wade through long and detailed descriptive information, thus the Q&A format that is informative and focuses their attention on the message - How Can They Help! I plan to use as many pictures as possible to enhance the delivery of information along with a series of Q&As. I have included a preliminary list of questions for your perusal and comment. I am also looking for additional questions to choose from and to make a final selection ASAP. Once the selection is made I will then have to formulate the most informative (and brief) answer to each. That is where everyone can contribute. I will need VA statistics and supporting information to incorporate in the answers. The following is a list of preliminary questions: Please note that I will be limited in the number that can be included so as you provide feedback please indicate a high, medium or low priority for inclusion.

Questions (not in any particular order):

**WHAT IS AN AN ALPACA?** (I would include Family, size, breeding info., etc.)

**WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?** (The origin of alpacas is important to understanding the animal itself)

**IS THE ALPACA INDUSTRY VIABLE AND SUSTAINABLE IN THE US?** (This is probably the question that will be targeted most by recipients. They will not want to support an industry that is not sustainable or with little potential for growth in VA)

**WHAT ARE THEY USED FOR (WHAT IS THE PRODUCT OF THE ALPACA INDUSTRY)?** ( I would include fiber statistics for VA as the primary product + any other folks consider important)

**HOW MANY ALPACA FARMS AND ALPACAS ARE IN VA?** (Need accurate numbers here)

**HOW DOES THE ALPACA INDUSTRY FIT IN AND SUPPORT THE VA AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY?** (It would be nice to have some financial statistics here, not only for alpacas themselves but also how alpaca farms support their local communities and businesses throughout VA)

**WHAT IS VAOBA AND WHAT DOES IT DO FOR THE VA ALPACA INDUSTRY?** (I would include Officers and Board of Directors + telephone numbers for the primary contact people)

**HOW CAN VA STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS AND REPRESENTATIVES HELP PROMOTE THE VA ALPACA INDUSTRY and WHO DO I CONTACT?** (Suggestions are needed here so I can identify specific actions that can be taken)

These are some questions (plus their answers) that I believe are pertinent to educating VA officials and for creating opportunities to solicit their assistance and support. Undoubtedly there are others. I would like some feedback from others because this is all our industry and we should have an opportunity to contribute. I will also need a list of potential recipient types.

If anyone has questions please feel free to contact me. My e-mail is always open for suggestions and you can call me at 540-587-6766 (home and office) or 540-525-0965 (Blackberry).

John G. Ferrante

**Board Discussion:** Sue thought we could include a questionnaire with election ballots or a separate mailing to poll the membership and email info directly to John.

**Marketing:** No report submitted. (Need Volunteers).

**Membership:** Membership Report for June 7, 2010 Meeting:

The following farms have renewed/joined VAOBA as farm members:

Misty Mountain Accoyo Suris - renewal AOBA member  
No changes to membership information

Ore Hill – renewal AOBA member  
One change: web address is now  
[www.orehillfarmalpacas.com](http://www.orehillfarmalpacas.com)

Fibergenix Suris (mistakenly sent \$75 – will contact) AOBA member  
Changes:  
Add Cell: 908-303-3953  
Fax: 540-947-5420 (call first)  
E Mail: [info@fibergenix.com](mailto:info@fibergenix.com)  
Website: [www.fibergenix.com](http://www.fibergenix.com)

Heronwood Farm – received today; not deposited yet AOBA member  
Changes:  
Add Fax: 540-592-3941  
E mail: [benrogersheronwood@hotmail.com](mailto:benrogersheronwood@hotmail.com)

The May newsletter contained a report to members encouraging membership renewals in both VAOBA and AOBA.

Respectfully submitted,  
Hank Boyd

Fred has noticed that there are 2 renewal forms out there. Since he is responsible for the membership list, he would like for all forms to go to him and then he will send Hank a spreadsheet so that he has all information. Sue motioned, Fred seconded and all accepted the membership report.

**Newsletter:** No report submitted. Our next newsletter will be in August.

**VAOBA Expo Show Report:** Judy Howe and Joe Kyger joined the meeting:

Platinum sponsorships are \$1500 – 2 pens, area for display, need at least 10 to 12 and 7 farms have already committed. Fred said the forms on the website do not work – Judy will check that out. No other sponsors yet but farms usually do this when they register. Fred said if we do not get enough sponsors we need to watch our expenses. Judy said we can scale back on food if we need to. Will decide later who to make contributions to; VT, 4-H, ARF.

Patti already has 62 spinoff entries – last year there were just under 250. Fred suggested another eblast be sent out to extend the deadline to June 30<sup>th</sup> (currently June 15<sup>th</sup>) to include judge's bio information (Sandy Ridge) with something that says "here's your chance to have your fleece judged by a judge from the west coast, fresh, new perspective..."

Regarding the fashion show, B-J is exploring vendors to see if they want to participate, donate articles or combine them with herdsire breedings. Judy stated that the herdsires do not need to be present, pictures and display board and a new tab will be created on the website with info and a brochure can be put in exhibitor's bags.

Judy has Patti putting together an ad for American Livestock to run in their late July issue – reduced rate for ads. Hank motioned to approve ad, Sue seconded, all agreed.

Judy reported that there are more rooms in town than last year even though it will again be VMI's parent weekend. Fred thought we should put an ad in something that will be distributed to them to draw them to the arena. Judy will advertise in newspapers – 600 alpacas is what we would like to have at the show. Registration opens August 15, 2010. Judy will send letters and forms out to sponsors.

#### **Action Items from Previous Meetings:**

**Neonatal Clinic:** No report.

**Dr. Anderson coming to Virginia:** No report.

**Vet School Monetary Support:** Les reported that their main contact has accepted another position outside of the university. Fred being on the GIRCOM committee will check out other states and their interactions with their local vet schools. Patti will also put something together. VAOBA will be in Alpaca Magazine article.

**Election:** Several people have volunteered to run as candidates for the board openings for the 2010-2011 term. Donna Higgason and Marian Holmes for Director at Large, Tonya Urban for President Elect, Russ Pond for Director at Large or Treasurer. Fred and Robin agreed to run again. Need candidate statements by June 10, 2010. Members must have their membership renewal in before the fiber symposium to get their \$50 discount. Election ends 30 days after mail date, return ballot goes to Les. Fred motioned and Robin seconded that Sue would take care of sending out an eblast, detailing final call for board candidates, all agreed.

**AOBA Compliance:** Ken brought up that he still has not received an answer from AOBA as to our compliance. He has done everything to comply. Sue felt there may be a hold up at AOBA due to new changes there and that it was time to resubmit anyway so this item will be removed from our action items.

#### **New Business:**

**Credit Card Processing:** The use of credit cards for membership renewal on the website and for the VAOBA show were discussed. After discussion of fees charged for credit card

processing, everyone thought it would be another way for farms to pay for the show, sponsorships and the herdsire auction. At the June 14, 2010 meeting, everyone agreed to the use of a credit card processing system.

**Budget - 2010 -2011 See Section 9.2 in ByLaws:** Board discussed that there needs to be a budget presented at the annual meeting. Needs changes for show expenses, base for memberships to remain stable. Sue suggested that Fred may be able to show a percentage instead of actual figures. Fred will send out something for comments to include 2009, 2010 and 2011.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Robin Watson  
Secretary 2009-2010